

## The Grower and the Shower by Carerra\_os

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**Summary:**

Day 19 Vines

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Billy wakes in a strange bed, not a hospital and not his own, there is the muted sound of a television on, the smell of grass and nature and he feels fine. He's been changed, cleaned up, no more black muck all over him, he blinks up at the ceiling. ***'Finally, it's been days.'*** Flayed hisses and Billy smiles, happy to not be alone again ***'Was about to go find a new host'*** Billy just scoffs and rolls his eyes unconvinced.

# The Grower and the Shower

## Author's Note:

Day Nineteen Vines from the Harringrove April Prompts

The website I used for the flower meaning when I wrote this, just in case anyone is curious about what each one means. <https://www.almanac.com/flower-meanings-language-flowers>

## The Grower and the Shower

Billy is sure they are going to die here, all of them, the flayed part of him, the little girl with the weird powers, the kids throwing fireworks, Steve. The hold the mind flyer has over him and the flayed part of him breaks with the little girl's reminder, he was happy once, maybe he could be happy again ' **We** ' the flayed reminds because they are a we now, it is not just Billy in here, they could be happy as they regain their own will again, they know they cannot have that under if the mind flyer has its way. Through Billy's memories the flayed decides it no longer wants the same things as the mind flyer, instead wanting this world intact, ready to fight with Billy against the monster that made it. They are strong enough to stop the first meaty tentacle that comes their way but when they see more aiming for them they know they cannot stop them all. They are at peace with dying. They did horrible things over the last week but they saved the girl, it seems like a fitting end but then something intervenes, someone.

Billy is not sure when Steve got down here to the ground floor but there he is suddenly right behind them checking on El as those things come their way and Billy is afraid they are going to get hit too. Billy is turning back to the monster but something catches their attention out of the corner of his eye. Steve's eye glow a verdant green, the

same green making little vines all over his visible skin, knitting the cuts on his face back together. Billy wants to turn and look at him properly as the flayed hisses ‘ **Pretty** ’ finally understanding the appeal when they never have before but then they have never seen Steve in person, only through Billy’s memories.

Billy is drawn back to the impending danger as the monster lets out a noise that vibrates through them, making them ache and burn with its anger. The floor starts crumbling in several places around them, thick green vines breaking through the ground shooting up and twisting around the tentacles and stopping them in their tracks.

The mind flyer roars and fights against the hold, more vines cropping up and wrapping around it, catching the one Billy is struggling to hold and wrenching it away from them. "Billy," Billy turns as Steve calls his name, it is the first time he has ever heard it from those lips. He would like to hear it again without the strain of panic.

"Billy!" Steve snaps and Billy blinks, well he gets to hear it again but still not the tone he would like to hear it in but it gets them moving. Billy scrambles over to Steve, El leaning against him holding her head and looking like she might get sick, Billy would not be surprised if she has a concussion after the knock to the head they gave her earlier. "Take El and get her out of here, she is what it's after."

Billy is about to listen when the flayed butts in ‘ **He's not going to last on his own.** ’ making Billy still and really look at Steve. Steve’s cuts are no longer knitted together, the little vines once holding them together are gone, leaving him freely bleeding from them again. Steve is pale, paler than normal, body tense hands shaking and his nose is bleeding now too, he looks like he could pass out at any moment. There is no way they can just leave him here to die because they have no doubt that would be the outcome, there is only one

choice to make, black veins cover Billy's skin giving him the strength to grab both El and Steve, tossing each over a shoulder.

"What are you doing?" Steve shouts, taken off guard and Billy sees one of the tentacles break loose as Steve's concentration gives but he regains it before it can reach them, thick green vines breaking more ground and springing up to protect them before wrapping around it and keeping it from finding another way around. The monster screams and it hurts again, burning through them and they take off running with the two super powered humans over their shoulders.

They carry them as far as they can through the maze of back corridors as the Mind Flyer continues to rage and roar, until a different sort of pain flares through them and they feel like they are dying. Billy collapses as the flayed part of him screams, dumping El and Steve on the ground with less care than he intends, crumpling next to them. Steve is unconscious, blood caking across his lips and chin, El is awake, green in the face as she continues to hold her head.

Billy grabs her, gives her a little shake to get her attention, teeth gritted "You have to get up and run kid." Billy insists, his own head throbbing as he burns like lava is being poured in his veins, he glares when she shakes her head in the negative.

"It's dying now." She looks past him where they came from. Maybe Billy cannot be sure after all of the twists and turns.

Billy definitely feels like something is dying. "Am I?" he asks, moving away from her and closer to Steve, who looks normal again, average human, no green vines creeping over his skin, just blood and cuts and bruises on his exposed flesh.

El looks at him, mouth screwing up as she thinks watching him lay down, rest his head against Steve's hip, one of them should be a little comfortable at least and if they are going to die well they did save Steve and El. They deserve to be as comfortable as possible in the end. He only briefly toys with the idea of pushing Steve to his stomach so he can use his ass as a pillow, sure it would be more comfortable than his boney hip but he hurts, weakened as the other part of him withers in pain, feels like something is trying to separate them by force, so he stays as he is. "I don't think so."

"What about-" Billy does not really know how to ask about the other part of him, the part that was not him before but after a week together definitely is.

"I don't know." She says with a little shake and Billy is just glad she understood, that he did not have to find the words to explain, he is having trouble thinking of them, eyes a little blurry as he blinks trying to keep them open.

He must have failed because El was in front of him before and now she is next to him and he had not seen her move. She uses one of Steve's arms to pillow her own head before her little hand is curling around Billy's and he lets his eyes fall shut. It is kind of nice knowing someone is with them if this does turn out to be the end, the burning pain has only gotten worse and Billy just curls his own fingers around her hand wondering if he will wake up alone if he wakes up at all.

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the muted sound of a television on, the smell of grass and nature and he feels fine. He's been changed, cleaned up, no more black muck all over him, he blinks up at the ceiling. '**Finally, it's been days.**' Flayed hisses and Billy smiles, happy to not be alone again '**Was about to go find a new host**' Billy just scoffs and rolls his eyes unconvinced.

"You're awake." Not a question as El comes in, bouncing up onto the bed to peer at him.

"Yes." He answers anyway, not really sure what else to say, maybe they should try and apologize for almost letting her be absorbed by an interdimensional monster.

' **We don't apologize**' Billy snorts and shakes his head. He is not really sure how to go about that anyhow, it is not like they had control over themselves in those moments. EL watches them and Billy wonders if she knows that the flayed is still there too, still alive and a part of him.

"HOP!" El shouts, grinning as he flinches at the sudden shrillness and they are tempted to kick her off the bed, Billy reasons that not following through on that urge is apology enough as the chief of police comes in. "Billy's awake."

"I can see that." Hopper huffs, looking Billy over. "How are you feeling son?"

"Pretty good" and they do Billy is pretty sure he should not, even with the flayed part of him intact making him heal faster, there had been a lot of damage done last night, a lot of damage done over the

week but he feels fine now.

‘ ***You’re welcome***’ Billy purses his lips to keep from snorting again, cannot help rolling his eyes, if it were not for his body Flayed would not be here either. Hopper just nods to himself barely paying them attention as he leaves the room and Billy just shoots El a raised eyebrow.

“He’s going to go tell Steve you’re awake. He was worried about you.” She says teasingly, grinning wider and Billy might do something about it if his mind was not buzzing over Steve. “Worried about both of you, he made you some weird drink, left some in the fridge and said he would make more.” She says with a knowing look “He said it was an alternative to all the shit you’d been ingesting before, would help keep you healthy without drinking bleach. I put some out for you a little while ago.” She says with a pinched face and a nod to some green looking concoction on the nightstand in a glass.

Billy grabs it buzzing as they take a sip, it does not taste the best but it quenches a thirst that has been at the back of his tongue since he became a we. “And how did Steve know about that?” He asks, shooting her a knowing look as he starts chugging down the drink.

“He had a lot of questions, he made sure you were healed while unconscious.” El’s brow pinches together and he kicks a toe against her knee in question. “I can’t do that.”

“Most cannot.” Billy offers awkwardly and El gives a pensive little nod and he asks the question they have been dying to know since they woke up. “So where is Steve?”

‘ *We should go see him!* ’ flayed says immediately and Billy cannot help but agree, El gives him a look like somehow she can hear them conversing and Billy is not so sure she cannot.

“He went home, said he needed to tend to his plants, I think really he was just uncomfortable with everyone knowing, he’s been keeping his powers a secret for a long time. Dustin is particularly upset about him keeping it a secret, he wouldn’t shut up until Max threatened him.” El says with a grin, eyes shifting toward the ceiling like she is remembering it fondly.

“Where is Max? Is she alright?” Billy asks, distracted enough before to not notice her absence.

“She’s fine at home, Susan would have worried otherwise, she was supposed to come back but with you supposedly under observation and not aloud visitors Susan didn’t want her wandering around.” Billy nods, it does not escape his notice that Neil is not mentioned and he has a hazy memory of threatening the man’s life.

Billy shakes it away asking what he really wants to know “Steve seemed okay when he left other than the, you know?” Billy waves his hand over his face to indicate what he means.

“Tired, I think it took a lot out of him. It takes a lot out of me when I use mine.” She says hand coming up to touch her upper lip right under her nose before she drops it back down. “I don’t think he’s used to that much strain.”

“I better go check on him then.” Billy says throwing the blankets off,



they want to find Steve and check on him, see for themselves that he is still breathing.

“Nope, you’re going home. It’s been three days, Max and Susan have been worried sick.” Hopper says blocking the doorway. “You can go see Steve after, I don’t care. No arguments let’s go.” He ignores the glower Billy shoots him already turning back and heading to the door

‘ *We could take him, we would win.*’ Billy laughs and shakes his head, yeah they are not doing that, they can wait a little bit to go find Steve. He glances over at El who nods her head and now he is really sure she can hear them, she just shoots him a grin and skips ahead of him to the car.

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“Where are you going Billy?” Max asks, standing in his doorway looking unimpressed at him, half in half out the window a few hours after he gets home.

“Going to go see Steve.” He offers, it will not hurt, even with the knowing look, he knows she will not tell, not again, not after what happened back in California when Billy tried sneaking out to see a boy. Neil is not even here to tell but a small scared part of him will always have that lingering worry of him finding out Billy is hanging out with some pretty boy.

“You could use the front door. I don’t think Neil is coming back this time and Mom’s never cared about it.” She points out and Billy knows Neil is not coming back, that vague memory grew stronger

when they got back to the house. He remembers them threatening Neil, promising him worse than death if he ever came back after the last time he tried to beat them. Flayed had come out, covered Billy's whole body, protected him and made sure Neil was sufficiently scared for his lie.

"Maybe I like doing it this way, it's more fun." Billy says, deflecting, he does not want to think too hard about the things they did when the Mind Flyer still had control. They did a lot worse things than scare off his abusive father.

"Well you look stupid, tell Steve I said hi." Billy tosses an empty ashtray in her direction, it hits the door frame and lands on his bed as he awkwardly finishes his climb out.

' *She is right, you do look stupid*' Flayed supplies unhelpfully, Billy pinching his face up in annoyance.

"We." Billy reminds getting scoffed at.

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Billy was going to knock but he figures they might not be welcome, that maybe Steve does not want visitors and not wanting to be denied they decide their best bet is to just break in. Black tendrils form at the ends of his fingers, twisting and turning and picking the lock on the door, excitement buzzing in them as it clicks open.

Some part of them knew there would be plants, logically with the way Steve had made vines spring from the ground, plants are an easy guess but they are not expecting the humid messy jungle scape that is the inside of the Harrington home. It looks so normal and unassuming from the outside but inside there is greenery everywhere, vines creeping up the walls, roots breaking through the floor, earth and flowers all over, trees and bushes filling the space. The heat is a little uncomfortable, warmer than they are accustomed to, now that they are free of the Mind Flyer they are still a little sensitive to the heat but it does not burn like it had before.

“So this is where you’ve been hiding.” Billy says when they finally find Steve in the basement after tracking all around the rest of the house, each room filled with various planets, they have taken over everything. The basement is cooler, than upstairs had been, but no less green and lush moon light shining through the high cut windows making Steve look like he is glowing. He is squatted down tending to the dirt covered ground finger brushing lightly over little viney plants but only his eyes are glowing that ring of green bright as he turns and spots Billy.

“I don’t recall inviting you here.” Steve says, eyes dulling and going back to their pretty brown as he watches Billy flops down on the bed in the center of the room, eyes on Steve the whole time.

“We wanted to see you.” Billy says, black veins creeping up and painting over his skin looking similar to the vines crawling over the ground.

“Do I have to worry about the Mind Flyer coming back?” Steve asks, eyes go green again and suddenly vines are creeping closer to Billy on

the bed.

*‘ Dangerous suspicious, pretty thing.’* Flayed is practically vibrating excitedly and Billy has to resist smiling, keeping his face serious as he addresses Steve’s concerns.

“As far as we know the Mind Flyer is dead, we were separated from it before it passed, between that and your little concoction here we are alive. Looks like you saved us pretty boy.” Billy points out.

“Wasn’t going to let you die but that doesn’t mean you aren’t dangerous.” Steve says lips pursed and squinting at Billy with suspicion.

“We protected you remember, down boy, we mean you no harm.” He quickly reassures hands up in a placating gesture as those vines creep closer and he knows just how dangerous they are, if they can hold back the Mind Flyer. What chance does Billy have even if the ones currently creeping closer are so much smaller? Steve watches them for a long minute, vines waiting poised and ready to attack before he finally nods and lets them slither back into the earthy ground and Billy relaxes back on the bed.

“Doesn’t explain why you’re here.” Steve says with a huff, standing before disappearing into a little side room, water running before Steve comes back out, hands clean, he sways a little as he makes it over to the bed, settling heavily next to Billy.

*‘ Still weak, shouldn’t be alone, we could have taken him if we needed to.’* Flayed points out needlessly and Billy rolls his eyes.

“Heard you were hiding, thought I’d come check on you.” Billy says looking at Steve closely, he looks better than he did that night and his cuts have closed up better than they would if left to do so naturally but he still thinks they should be further along based on what little he saw that night. That night took a lot out of Steve. That much is clear.

“I’m not hiding” Steve hisses, turning a glare on Billy like that would ever work on him.

“Really and you expect me to believe that you really had to come tend to your plants instead of waiting to see if we were going to live?” Billy asks, smirking, El had been very forthcoming about how worried Steve was over them, going on about it in greater detail on the car ride home.

“God you are so full of yourself, I couldn’t care less what happens to you!” Steve lies, flush creeping over his face, standing to move away only to stop in his tracks as a single red dahlia sprouts followed by bunches of tarragon and pink camellia sprouts from the ground surrounding his bare feet.

‘ *Oh pretty liar he likes us too.* ’ Flayed hisses gleefully, having full access to Billy’s memory and honing in on his delight at the flowers.

Billy grins “You’re flowers say otherwise pretty boy.” Steve keeps glaring at him and Billy grabs his hand before he can move to step over his new plants. “My mom knew all about the flower language and she taught it to me.” Steve’s cheeks go hotter and blue bells start cropping up. “Oh no, none of that pretty boy.” Billy says, tugging him back down to sitting on the bed. “If we could bloom flowers right

now this palace would be full of even more pink camellia and that's not all. There would be red and white ones, aster, white chrysanthemums, gardenias and, and... " Billy trails off thinking of other plants that could possibly represent their feeling for Steve.

Steve laughs, still blushing brightly as he leans closer, letting his head rest against Billy's shoulder "You can stop, I think I get it."

*' Kiss him, kiss him now! '* Flayed insists.

"Are you sure we could name so many others?" Billy says, fingers finding Steve's chin and tilting his face up, excitement humming under his skin, black veins creeping out, tendrils brushing over Steve's skin as Billy leans in and kisses him softly.

The kiss breaks too soon for their liking but Steve turns away, yawning with a "Maybe you can name some more after I take a nap, I've been tired for days, not all of us got a three day nap." Billy drags Steve up the bed with him, ignoring his protest about dirt getting on the blankets. He is too tired to actually do anything about it other than complain.

*' White Jasmine, calla lily, white roses.'* Flayed keeps rattling them off, excited to assist, to convince Steve to be theirs.

"We'll have a whole list for you by the time you wake up pretty boy, I've got a lot of things I've been waiting to say." Billy whispers, Steve already dropping off to sleep as black tendrils pull a blanket up over him.

Billy watches as Steve's breath evens out in sleep quickly, vines curling up over the edge of the bed toward him, little flowers sporting on the ends as they touch his skin, wrapping loosely around strands of his hair. ' ***Our pretty boy***' The flayed part of him hisses, tendrils sliding off his skin and making their own little flower shapes against Steve's arm.

**-End**

**Author's Note:**

<https://ghostofjellyfishforgotten.tumblr.com/>